

SECTION 8.40 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last Update: 12/08

1. If it has been more than a year since an employee has received an evaluation, what period of time should be covered in this evaluation?

Since the DAS Administrative Rules prescribe an annual review, the period of time covered by the evaluation should be the most recent twelve-month period.

2. Should probationary employees receive a formal performance evaluation?

Although not required by rule, all employees should receive a six-month evaluation at the conclusion of the probationary period to document why they should or should not attain permanent status. In fact, providing some type of performance assessment around the conclusion of the third month can help the employee with mid-course corrections in their performance. It is good business practice to provide the new employee with their individual performance plan on or close to their first day of employment so they are aware of expectations from the start. It is recommended that the supervisor provide the employee with frequent feedback throughout the probationary period, whether it be formal or informal.

Keep in mind, the probationary period is also a screening device. In fact, it is one of the best if not the best screening device, because it “tests” the employee’s performance in the actual job and is thus extremely job-related.

3. How does DAS determine whether performance evaluations are completed on time?

The data fields in HRIS include the evaluation period beginning date, the evaluation period end date, the overall rating, and the evaluation date, the sign-off date of the reviewing official (person who writes the Evaluation). After the Evaluation has been signed by the supervisor, employee, and next level of higher management, a hard copy is to be forwarded to the personnel assistant for the official employee file. Upon receipt, the personnel assistant enters these data into HRIS.

Personnel assistants have the month of July to finish entering performance evaluation data for the previous fiscal year into HRIS. DAS queries the HRIS database to determine, by department, the number of employees who received an evaluation during the prior fiscal year and calculates the “completion rate” by comparing that number with the agency’s overall workforce. The query is based on the evaluation date in HRIS; to be considered “timely,” an employee’s evaluation date must fall into the July 1 – June 30 period of the prior fiscal year.

4. What if the employee refuses to sign the evaluation?

First, the employee needs to be aware that signing the evaluation merely documents that they have received a copy of the evaluation and it has been discussed with them. Their signature does not indicate that they agree with the contents of the evaluation. Also, should they not agree with what the supervisor has said in the evaluation, there is a section of the evaluation specifically intended for their input. This provides them with the opportunity to disagree on the record with the supervisor’s appraisal of their performance.

If the employee still refuses to sign the evaluation, the supervisor needs to note the employee’s refusal to sign where the signature would have gone on the form, sign their own name and date.

5. Do I need to do an evaluation if one of my staff is promoted, transferred, demoted or leaves state government?

Yes. DAS administrative rules 62.2(2) second paragraph indicates that an exit performance review should be conducted for these events. This may seem like a wasted effort, if the employee will no longer be performing the responsibilities of the job, but for the record, it documents the employee's performance for the period up to their departure. This is very helpful to the new supervisor for employees who are remaining in state government. The rule cited above also requires that a copy of the evaluation be sent to the new supervisor for their records. But even for employees who are leaving state government, it is an effective way for the supervisor to collect exit interview information from the employee. This may not serve as the entire exit interview, however, in agencies where a neutral third party also conducts exit interviews.

6. Do the performance evaluation period beginning and end dates have to be the same as the within grade pay increase eligibility dates?

No. These are separate human resource transaction concepts, and therefore they occupy separate data fields in HRIS. The two sets of dates frequently are the same, particularly for non-contract employees, because an evaluation given within the last twelve months must accompany the pay documents for a within grade pay increase. The supervisor may change the evaluation period dates at any time, but this should be done with the employee's full knowledge. The evaluation period should not be greater than 12 months.

Some agencies or units prefer to do all performance evaluations at the same time each year. To move to such a cycle will probably require changing dates for some or all employees. Again, the employee should be informed of this change at the start of the new evaluation period, so they are fully aware of the time period involved, and the new dates should not span a period longer than 12 months.

7. Is it necessary for the next higher level of management to sign Part 1, the Individual Performance Plan?

We recommend they do so as a means of indicating they have been a part of the process of developing the Individual Performance Plan.

8. How do I arrive at an overall rating?

There is no set formula for arriving at the Overall Rating. It is not an average of the ratings of all the Individual Performance Strategies/Goals. The supervisor needs to consider which of the strategies/goals are most critical to the job, or if not done well, will negatively impact the job as a whole. The employee should be aware at the beginning of the evaluation period which goals will be weighted more than others. See "The Evaluation" in Section 8.30 of this chapter.

9. Can I evaluate sooner than 12 months?

Yes. You can evaluate the employee as frequently as there is need to do so, however, it is recommended that the employee be informed of the shortened evaluation period well in advance of its end. We recommend performance evaluations be done at least twice during the probationary period: approximately at the end of the first three months and then just before the end of the probationary period. You may also want to evaluate permanent employees more often than annually, especially when needing to monitor someone's performance more closely to encourage improvement or when new tasks or projects are assumed. You may also need to evaluate the employee sooner if they transferred from another position/agency and did not receive an evaluation at the time that action became effective.

10. Can there be more than four individual performance strategies/goals?

Yes. The button at the top of the template that says “Add Goal” will allow you to do this. When downloading the form and transferring it to your hard drive, be sure you save it correctly so this formatting remains. Before adding a fifth or sixth individual performance strategy/goal, or more, carefully consider whether these are truly needed. The more you add, the more the document starts to become a work plan or “to do” list rather than a performance plan and the less focus the employee will have on key results to be achieved. Also, the supervisor will need to monitor more performance data and evaluate more goals.

11. What if the employee isn’t able to meet the Individual Performance Strategy/Goal through no fault of their own?

If it’s possible to update or revise the Individual Performance Plan during the evaluation period as changes occur which affect the employee’s performance, you should do so, making sure the employee receives a copy of the revised, dated version. You may also refer to extenuating circumstances in the “Results” section of the Evaluation.

12. Do I have to update the Individual Performance Plan every year if the job doesn’t change?

Yes, although this may be no more than revising Part 1 to put in new evaluation period dates. Even though some state jobs don’t change much over time, it doesn’t hurt to discuss expectations for the year ahead with the employee. There may be changes in leadership or organizational philosophy that need to be discussed, even if job duties and responsibilities remain the same.

13. How soon should I do the performance evaluation after the end of the evaluation period?

Though the DAS administrative rules do not address how soon the evaluation is due after the end of the evaluation period, we recommend it be done within a month – that includes both the writing of it and sharing it with the employee. Although the supervisor should have been collecting performance data throughout the period, their memory of the employee’s performance is clearest at that time. And the feedback is more meaningful to the employee when given promptly, so they can immediately begin to address the supervisor’s comments.

14. Can an individual department require more stringent time frames for evaluation completion than what DAS requires?

DAS recommends 30 days from the end of the evaluation period for the completion of individual evaluations. Our definition of “timely” for calculating overall agency completion rates is different (see response to #3 above). However, if a particular agency wants to require a 30-day completion rate for all individual evaluations, they can do that. However, if they do so, we recommend that expectation be part of all their supervisors’ performance plans, and, of course, if the department adopts such a policy, that they be prepared to deal with those who don’t follow it.

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